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THE WESTERN CONTINENT:

A DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED IN

THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, TROY,

JULY FOURTH, 1841.

BY NATHAN S. S. BEMAN.

TROY, N. Y.:

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CORRESPONDENCE

TROY, JULY 9, 1841.

REV. NATHAN S. S. BEMAN,

Dear Sir—At a meeting held at the Session Room of the First Presbyterian Church, on the evening of the 8th instant, the undersigned, appointed for that purpose, were directed to solicit for publication the Discourse delivered by you on Sabbath morning last, as appropriate to the anniversary of our National Independence.

Agreeably to this direction, we respectfully solicit a copy of that Discourse for publication, to be executed under the superintendence of a committee to be appointed for that purpose.

We are, with great respect,
Your obedient servants,

H. C. ROSSITER,
ANDREW LADUE,
L. VANDERHEYDEN,
JOSEPH WHITE,
CHARLES P. HARTT.

TROY, JULY 10, 1841.

TO THE COMMITTEE:

Gentlemen—I have received, and read with much gratification, your communication of yesterday; and would say in reply, that I will submit to your disposal a copy of the Discourse delivered on the 4th of July,—but for special reasons I wish to withhold it from publication for a few weeks. At the expiration of the period I have proposed to myself, it shall be placed in your hands.

Most respectfully yours,

NATHAN S. S. BEMAN.

Messrs. H. C. Rossiter, Andrew Ladue,
L. Vanderheyden, Joseph White,
Charles P. Hartt.

DISCOURSE.

The discovery of this continent by Columbus, whether contemplated as an effect or a cause, must ever occupy a high place among the illustrious events of our world. While we should ascribe this eventful discovery to the wise providence of God, we may, at the same time, consider it as the necessary result of the progress of human improvement. It was an end naturally attained by that spirit of active enterprize which had already begun its career in Europe, and which, for many years anterior to this period, had exerted an influence upon the various interests of human life.

The fifteenth century was an age of mind. We must not expect, however, to see the human intellect at that time, highly cultivated or richly stored; nor to find knowledge generally or widely diffused: but the darkness which had, for centuries, brooded over the nations, was now passing away, and the fetters which had fast bound the human powers, were greatly relaxed, though not effectually broken. A new era had begun. If the sun had not already purpled

the east, or gilded the mountain-tops, the morning star had arisen, and as a commissioned herald, bearing his credentials with him, and making his own proclamation, had prophesied of a bright and coming day.

The rotundity of the earth was now fully believed by men of knowledge and research; the mariner's compass had been invented and applied to the purposes of navigation; the art of printing had taught men, to some extent, to give permanency and rapid circulation to thought; and at the very dawn of the next century, originating, no doubt, in the same spirit of intellectual emancipation, the lights of religious liberty, which have never since been extinguished, were kindled up in some parts of Germany, and blazed on the mountains, amid the pure air and the clear streams of Switzerland. In one word, the old world was prepared for the birth of the new. The time appointed of heaven, and matured by the progress of man, and clearly indicated by the position and relations of the world, had arrived for the consummation of the grand result of pre-existing causes; and in that result to furnish a future cause which should, for centuries, and probably through all coming ages, put forth an influence, in shaping the destinies of the world, as powerful as any other event recorded on the page of history.

And since that period, the discovery of this country, with its affiliated and kindred events, has exerted an almost unbounded influence over man. It has changed the course of human affairs from the chan-

nel in which they were flowing along, and in which they might have continued to flow, for many ages, if this continent had not emerged from the dark ocean in which it had been buried, perhaps from the infancy of its being, or certainly from time immemorial, from the eye of civilized man.

It is my purpose to trace, on the present occasion, the already ascertained, and the future probable, results of the discovery and settlement of this Western Hemisphere; and especially that portion of it which constitutes our own Republic.

Many things connected with this inquiry, and deeply interesting to man, are now matters of history, and may be appealed to as authentic facts; and others are among the coming events which have indicated their future existence by casting their shadows before them; and may be foreseen with probability, and, in some instances, with certainty, by an eye accustomed to trace the connection of cause and effect, and to follow, in successive order, a long series of political and moral acts and their results.

The earliest and the most obvious influence exerted by the discovery of the new world, was seen and felt in the impulse given to industry and enterprize throughout the greater part of Europe. If this discovery was originally one of the numerous achievements of that spirit, as already intimated, its relations were soon changed, and it became, in its turn, the parent of a similar, and a more vigorous offspring; and every land, and every department of life, was at once cheered by its presence, and resuscitated by its

power. The maritime countries where this spirit was first awakened, and whose connections with this subject were more direct and intimate than others, felt, as we may readily suppose, the earliest and strongest sympathy with every thing which related to this continent; but these, by new relations and extending interests, soon communicated their impulse to others, till central Europe, and the commercial islands of the sea, and the whole civilized world, were made to feel the magic touch of a single fact. America blazed as a new star in the western sky; and the vast interests, real and imaginary, which threw a halo of brightness around it, attracted the gaze of every eye, and kindled up an unwonted ardor among the nations. The best informed and the most civilized communities of the eastern hemisphere, from the centre to the extremities, became interested, directly or indirectly, in the new state of things. The human mind, which was beginning to emerge from ages of darkness, was now brought under the influence of new motives, and was moved by strong attractions. Kings and cabinets felt their power; and all their resources, intellectual and physical, were laid under contribution, that they might carry out and perfect their schemes. Ambition dreamed of novel fields of conquest where immortal wreaths might be gathered to adorn the victor's brow; and avarice saw, in the dim and hazy distance, lofty mountains of gold, and deep and unexplored caverns of diamonds and other precious stones. The rival powers of Europe which had contended for pre-em-

inence on the soil of the old world, transfused the same spirit across the Atlantic, and became competitors for discovery, dominion and wealth, on the soil of the new.

And this excitement was not confined to the elevated ranks of life, nor to the master-spirits of the age. The wealthy, the ambitious, and the learned, first caught the flame, but it eventually kindled the whole mass. It descended from the throne of power and the saloon of fashion, to the straw-thatched cottage and the humble work-shop, till all ranks in society were brought under new influences; and these had their origin in the discovery and colonization of the Western Continent. As viewed by the popular mind, and as it stood prospectively connected with the interests of man, it was a fact of more deep and thrilling power than any recorded on the page of history. It was so exciting in its nature—so extended and various in its ramifications—and its interests and influence were so interwoven with all others, literary, scientific, political, moral and religious, that it furnished, at once, the lever and the power which moved the world.

Nearly allied to this general excitement, imparted by the event we are contemplating, we may notice the new outlet which was opened for the overgrown population of the eastern continent. The precise influence of this upon human happiness, for a single generation, it might be difficult to ascertain. The condition of many of the colonists was, no doubt, greatly improved, while not a few passed through

unexampled hardships, and went down, with blighted hopes, to an early grave. But draining off the surplus population from the older countries of Europe, produced, on the whole, a salutary effect upon their political and moral condition. Wars were, probably, rendered less frequent, and in the incipient enterprize of planting colonies, the people became more important in the estimation of their rulers. The new uses to which man could be applied, added a new value to human life, created additional safeguards for his protection, stayed the footsteps of carnage, and, in some instances, it is not improbable, weakened the arm of oppression. It is true, that in order to finish the picture, we must take into the account the bloody and often unprovoked wars which were waged upon the original occupants of this soil, the bitter cruelty of which neither our fathers nor their sons, have been, as yet, willing to atone. It has always seemed to me, on the clearest principles of reason and morals, to be a reproach to civilization and the christian religion—these twin sisters of charity—that such a noble race of men should be exterminated in their march, or be left to expire within the reach of their hand, and under the inspection of their eye. But I must not indulge in this digression from my main purpose.

Nor will I dwell longer on those results of the discovery of this country which respect man merely as a being capable of animal enjoyment or suffering. Among the more important and more enduring, as it regards its influence upon his interests as an intellec-

tual and moral being, upon the institutions of society of which he is a member, and upon the social character of the world, is the opportunity which this country affords of a full and fair experiment of self-government among an enlightened and active people. This remark must be applied to the Western Continent with many and great qualifications. Some of the colonies brought with them across the Atlantic, the principles of a rapid growth, a gradual decay, and final self-dissolution. The Castalian and the Gaul were not fitted for such an enterprize. Colonization has never flourished in their hands; and especially has it proved a failure when contemplated as the germ, or the opening bud, of prospective liberty and ultimate independence. They admitted some materials into the frame-work of their colonial governments—or there was something unsound in the foundation and corner-stone of social virtue and religious principle, which operated as a drawback upon their prosperity; and time, which is the only sure test of what is wise and expedient in human institutions, has already presented to the world, as the workmanship of their hands, a frail and shattered structure, and, in some instances, exhibited little less than a mouldering mass of ruins. In some cases their rich possessions have passed into more vigorous hands, and have come under the dominion of wiser councils and a better policy; and, in others, where revolution has been projected and entered upon, for the purpose of promoting freedom and securing the rights of man, the experiment has been less decisive and triumphant than

could have been wished. For a fair, and full, and unembarrassed test of the principle of self-government—we must look to the Anglo-Saxon colonies. They possessed not only the physical, but the moral qualities, demanded for a work of this nature. They had not only the bone and muscle and enterprize, necessary as the elements of such an undertaking, but they brought with them a more enlightened christianity, and a better code of moral duties, than any other adventurers to this western world. The territory now constituting the United States—the greater part of which was once covered with English colonies—seems to have been selected by God and man, for testing—and, it may be, for forever settling—the simple, though momentous question, "*whether a people can govern themselves.*" Thus far the attempt has proved successful. The experience of more than half a century, has, in some good degree, tested the strength and durability of our institutions, and given the friends of freedom and equal rights reason to hope, that their final and time-tried results may be as permanent, as the present aspect is bright and cheering.

If any should be disposed to think, that it is merely an incidental occurrence, that the settlement of this country has furnished a fit occasion for the construction of a government embracing equal rights, and where the power is confessedly and practically in the hands of the people—it may be replied, that no other experiment could well have been made, or the problem have been solved in any other way.

Where was there a spot on the other continent, or on the wide earth, open for such a purpose? None of the larger kingdoms or empires were disposed, or are now disposed, to enter upon such a measure. And if any of the smaller States had adopted the broad notions of political and religious freedom, as held in this country, they could no more have continued to exist, in the midst of surrounding influences, than a single spark of fire could live and burn in the centre of the ocean. Such a republic, amidst the crowned and mitred heads of Europe, would have been a lamb among wolves. The little republics of Venice and Genoa, though they never fully carried out the principle of self-government, and though popular rights continued to be crushed beneath the superincumbent weight of an overgrown and proud aristocracy, have long since read, amidst their own political ruins, an admonitory lecture to the world which will not soon be forgotten.

But other and more formidable obstacles were in the way of a fair trial of self-government, in Europe. No people in any country were prepared to govern themselves, at the time this continent was discovered, and began to be planted with colonies. Had the population of any part of the old world been taken up, in mass, and transferred to any territory of the new, they could not have formed a republic with any rational hope of success. They were born under unpropitious stars for such an enterprize. They had been educated in a poor school, and had formed their habits and modes of thinking

under a bad political dynasty, for the great work of teaching the world the lessons of self-government. There were choice spirits, it is true, in many countries, competent to this undertaking, but they were only the few among the many,—and to these the voice of Providence seemed to say, come out from among them, and found a new empire in a new world—plant the Tree of Freedom in a soil remote from the tyrant's ax and fire—and then repose under its cool shade—inhale the fragrance of its opening flowers—and partake of its ambrosial fruit. This tree is of fairer proportions, of more beauteous foliage, and of sweeter product, than any which ever grew upon the earth, except the one planted by the hand of God, which remained untasted, and bore the name of the "Tree of Life." Of these two trees, the latter grew in Paradise, and the former is now taking deep root in the land of our birth and our love. They may belong, for aught I know, to the same genus.

If the opening of this continent to civilized man, had been distinguished by no other peculiar feature, than the one now specified, it would deserve a high place in the annals of the world. This was the great *desideratum* of the nations. The rights of man had been, for ages, committed for safe keeping to the hands of kings, and lords, and political ecclesiastics; and where this "three-fold cord" was thrown around the necks of the people, there was little prospect of a speedy change for the better. Hope, long deferred, had made "the heart sick." The governments of

the earth, with a very few exceptions, had been founded in oppressionand violence, and had been administered with one single object steadily before the eye, and that was the aggrandizement of the few by the sacrifice of the rights and interests of the many. Asia, from the days of the potent Nimrod, had groaned aloud, and bled at every pore, under this ponderous curse. Her kingdoms had been kept in agitation, by "the mighty thunderbolts of war," and her plains had drunk the blood of slaughtered millions, for no other purpose, than that of crushing one oppressive dynasty to set up another of the same character in its place; and of putting down one despot, in order to exalt another, perhaps, still more reckless and bloody, to the throne. The good of the people was never thought of. The exaltation of man—the cultivation of his mind—the improvement of his morals—the calling forth and perfecting of his energies—and the multiplication and enlargement of the sources of his rational and social enjoyments, had never excited the attention or disturbed the tranquility of those who looked upon themselves as born to command, and who claimed it as their imprescriptible right to drive their chariots of iron over the necks of the down-trodden and the oppressed. Such objects as these would have formed an aim too low for the minds of statesmen and heroes. And the same picture, with its strong colors a little faded, would present the true image of too many of the governments of Europe. It is not necessary, in this description, to state the case stronger than it is. It

need not be affirmed that liberty had been banished from that quarter of the globe—that her purest fires did not glow and burn in any hearts—or that the existing systems of government were not, in many respects, the monuments of wisdom, benevolence and justice. But while we accord all that truth and charity can demand—it may be safely affirmed, that there is not one political system in Europe, which is founded on the principle of equal rights. Distinctions are created, by immemorial usage and by statute law, which God and nature never sanctioned. Man is treated as the creature of circumstances, stripped of the attribute of self-government, and loaded down with adventitious disabilities which crush him to the earth, and "grind him to powder." It is here, and here alone, that the fundamental law of the land professes to sanction and carry out the decree of nature and of nature's God, "that all men are created equal—that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights—that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

But as important as this point may seem—and as lasting and beneficent as the influence of our political institutions may be, in securing the richest blessings to ourselves and to our posterity, and in their direct and incidental action upon other nations, there is one other result of the event now under examination, which deserves, perhaps, a still higher place in our estimation, and in our grateful recollections:—I mean the practical connection of this country with the Christian Religion. If civil and political liberty is suit-

ed to the nature of man; if it is necessary, in order to call forth and perfect the highest capabilities of his being, religious liberty is much more so. The former is freedom in relation to man; the latter is freedom in relation to God. The one contemplates and protects the interests of men as social beings; the other respects the rights of conscience, which are priceless in value, and which are too sacred for the interference, however indirect or remote, of any being but our Creator and ourselves.

The condition of the world, at the time this country was discovered, and began to be peopled by European colonies, was, as it regards this subject, to the last degree, dark and depressing. The lights of christianity which had been kindled by the Apostles, and which had been kept alive for several centuries, by their successors, was now dimmed and almost extinguished. The corrupt alliance of church and state, had robbed the gospel of all its native power and loveliness; and its sanctions which were intended, by its author, to reclaim the heart from evil, and promote even-handed justice between man and man, were employed for hardly any other purpose than to prop the throne of despotic power, and to rob the people of the rights and attributes of men. Both the design, and the tendency, of this unholy alliance, was to disrobe the gospel of its heavenly lustre, and perpetuate the worst forms of human oppression. The darkness of Europe in this respect, might be felt. It was a midnight without a moon, or star, or

feeble taper to break, by a solitary ray, the dark, and dense, and pervading gloom!

But before our own country was settled by English colonies, the religious state of Europe had greatly changed for the better. The reformation commenced by Luther, twenty-five years after the discovery of this country by Columbus, and prosecuted by other congenial spirits—the friends of man and of free discussion—had broken the mysterious spell, and marred the triple crown, and brought into doubt the infallibility of the head that wore it. But even at that period, though the darkness was breaking away, the rights of conscience and of private judgment were neither understood, nor protected. The Pilgrim Fathers of New England, who were probably the most enlightend and pious men that ever colonized any country, were rooted up from their own native soil, and driven across the ocean by the storms of persecution. In the most christian and catholic kingdom of the old world—a kingdom boasting of its "Magna Charta" and its protestant christianity—they were not permitted to preserve conscience inviolate, in the worship of God. But these men were honest. They counted the cost, and made their decision, and acted upon it. They cheerfully braved the ocean-storm, encountered the gloom of the vast and unbroken wilderness, and exposed themselves to the treachery of savage neighbors, rather than deny God, and sacrifice religious principle. I revere their memory for these heroic acts. I would write their names upon the face of heaven, in stars, or give them

to the winds to be floated, in triumph, to the ends of the earth. This generation, our land, and the world are deeply indebted to them for their moral courage, and its blessed results; and it is believed, that the last generation of men who shall stand upon the earth, in the perfected reign of Christ, will reap a rich harvest of spiritual blessings from their magnanimity, their steady adherence to principle, and their disinterested sacrifices.

In this country, and in this alone, religion is placed upon the proper basis; and I pray God, that no political intriguing—no human revolutions—may ever shake it from its deep and holy foundations. Every man should be left free in the enjoyment of his own religious views, and in the performance of his own religious rites. In these he may claim protection from the State, and beyond this the civil power cannot go. This is the basis on which our government has placed religion; and it is no small triumph of principle, in this matter, that the gospel of Jesus Christ, is, in no country producing more blessed fruits, than under the operation of the voluntary principle in our own.

Without laying claim to prophetic gifts, or arrogating to myself any special foresight or sagacity in these matters, I firmly believe, that the popular principle in government, and the voluntary principle in religion, are, in their combined action with many other things which belong intrinsically to our country and our position, destined to carry forward this nation to an eminence never yet attained by any

people. We cannot look forward one or two centuries, without being wrapped in those bright visions of the future which all must devoutly wish may be true; and which nothing but our own errors and vices can render unreal and fallacious.

Nor will the joyful consequences be restricted to our own republic, or to this hemisphere. From the first settlement of this country, its reflex action on the old world, may be clearly traced; and this influence has strengthend with every revolving year. Since the acknowledgement of our independence, by other nations, the maturity of our political system, and the practical developement of our physical resources, the name and power of America have been known and felt in every land—on every continent and every island of the globe. Nor is this reflex moral power likely to cease, or diminish. From the increased facilities of intercourse among the nations, the world is brought together, and men thus congregated, will think, compare, and form their own conclusions. The power of steam, though it has been applied and governed mainly by the hand of avarice, will yet be enlisted in the cause of letters, science, freedom and religion. Indeed it is already promoting their interests: for the most part indirectly and incidentally it is true, but still powerfully and effectually doing the work. As the enterprising, the great, and the good of all nations are brought more and more into social and mental contact, we may expect that national prejudices will subside, and that whatever is excellent in legislation, national policy, and religion,

will be candidly examined, and universally adopted. Our own position, in this respect, is peculiar. From the recency of our origin as a nation, and situated as we are, remote from the political collisions of the eastern continent, we have a moral power of our own for making a favorable impression on the nations of the earth. Here, more than in armies and navies, lies our national prowess—a prowess that may subdue the world, not to our yoke, but to our principles.

And this work has already begun. The fire is now burning, though covered up and smothered in many a heart, in different and far distant lands, which was kindled by sparks from American altars. This fire long since burst into a flame, on the plains of Greece, and achieved its object. The workings of the same influence may be seen, at this day, in the struggles of the English dissenters, who demand religious freedom at the hands of their rulers, as they have received it at the hands of God; and in the prosecution of their rights, on this subject, they are dealing blows upon the Church Establishment, till the old fabric reels under their intellectual and moral power. It is the same war of principle which was once waged, in that land, by our Puritan fathers, and from which they were compelled, by the force of circumstances, to retreat to this western wilderness. The contest was suspended only for a time. The spirit which gave birth to it, lives in the heart of the nation, and can expire only with its being. It has been renewed upon the success of the American experiment;

and it will never be relinquished till the voluntary principle is carried out, and till men in that country, as in this, may enjoy the right of adopting their own religion, not by an act of Parliament, but by an act of mind—and of obeying the dictates of conscience without paying a money-tax for the privilege.

In contemplating our own position, and the great moral power which the radical principles of our government, and our religious freedom, are adapted to exert on other nations, it must ever be a matter of deep regret to the patriot and the christian, that there should have been such defects in carrying out these principles, as must greatly obscure their lustre, and essentially retard their progress. But such is the fact, and it is in vain to close our eyes against it. Could we succeed in obscuring our own vision, we can never put out the eyes of the world; and our highest attainment would be to deceive ourselves, and not others. We are bound to meet the difficulty to which I refer, with the magnanimity that becomes a powerful and free people. If an American should wonder, as he sometimes does, why the nations of Europe do not admire the sun of freedom which blazes in our heavens, and why they are not disposed to walk in the beams of its brightness; he ought to be told, for his own humiliation, that republican hands have hung a dark cloud over one half of its orb, and produced a long and sad eclipse.

The existence of American Slavery, for more than half a century, under a free constitution, has unfolded a new page in the book of man; it has opened an-

other seal, and unrolled another parchment, written within and without, with the deep, and dark, and hidden things of human paradoxes. It has demonstrated that men may be clamorous for liberty, and record it in their own political oracles, as an "unalienable" right, and at the same time, frame oppression by law, and fasten chains on their fellows whom they declare, upon the title-page of their national history, to be their "equals." It is to be feared, that as a nation, we are somewhat blinded on this subject; that we often come to the adjudication of this whole case, with a bribe burning in our right hand, and with the heart, which should glow with devotion towards the heavens, and melt with kindness to the earth, breathing rebellion against the indelible image of God, and the unalienable rights of man. It is to be feared, that in this respect, we are furnishing another illustration, that men may see motes in their brother's eye while there are beams in their own. With what cutting irony might a slave, if he were familiar with the Declaration of Independence and the Bible, apply the words of the Hebrew bard to his republican master: "It was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it. But it was thou, a man—mine equal."

The picture drawn by Solomon, from his own observation, is a true likeness of the world in every age. It is taken, and touched, to the life. I hope in heaven, that our own country may yet prove herself an exception. "So I returned and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and behold

the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter." How true is this picture, both in the outline, and the filling up? While we boast of our national freedom, who sympathizes with the down-trodden slave? On the morning of our National birth-day, for example, which is hailed with songs of gladness by more than fourteen millions of free hearts, what chord of tenderness vibrates to the interests of three millions, in domestic bondage, among us? With a few noble exceptions, they have "no comforter." Both power and sympathy are found "on the part of their oppressors." In the halls of legislation, in the courts of justice, at the bar of public opinion, on the arena of political strife, and at the altar of God, they are often denied a hearing. On this point, church and state, in this republic, are united. Solomon was right—the oppressed have "no comforter"; and the poet has not overdrawn the melting picture:

"Who shall avenge the Slave? I stood and cried;
The earth—the earth—the echoing sea replied.
I turned me to the ocean, but each wave,
Declined to be the avenger of the slave.
Who shall avenge the slave? My speeies cry,
The winds, the waves, the lightnings of the sky.
I turned to these: from them one murmur ran,
The right avenger of the slave is man.
Man was my fellow—next by him I stood,
Wept, and besought him by the voice of blood.
Scornful he looked, as proud on earth he trod,
Then said, the avenger of the slave is God.
I looked, in prayer, to heaven: awhile 'twas still,
And then, methought, God's voice replied, I will."

If this one evil were abolished, in our own country, such is the genius of our government, and such the activity, enterprize and perseverance of our

countrymen, that I verily believe, the term of half a century would be sufficient to carry freedom and christianity, in triumph, around the globe.

Incompetent as I am to the task, I cannot dismiss such a subject as this without attempting a tribute, however imperfect the design, or feeble the execution, to the memory of our Patriot Fathers. They were no common race of men. God made them for the times in which they lived and acted, and the spirit of the times raised them to that eminence which they finally attained. When we consider their number, their talents, their virtues, and their achievements, it would be difficult, in the annals of the world, to find their equals, in any country, during a single age. It may be truly said, that "there were giants in the earth in those days." And God, in special favor to our land, gave us an army of them, in this single crisis of our national being,—and every man in that army was himself a host. Their love of liberty was inhaled with their first breath, and they had never learned to live in any other element. Their patriotism breathed, amidst their other virtues, a master-passion, and rendered them "mighty in words and in deeds." Their disinterested sacrifices for the public weal—their inflexible adherence to justice, let the blow fall where it might—their magnanimity amid scenes and circumstances the most cheerless and depressing—their fortitude that could endure every thing but the tyrant's heavy yoke and his galling fetters—the cool and collected courage, inspired by the love of God and their country, which faced the gath-

ering storm, which seemed ready to burst upon their devoted heads, have long since commanded the admiration of the world, and may well excite a deeper and holier emotion in the bosom of their offspring. On them, under propitious heaven, hung, for a time, the fate of our empire, and the hopes of the world. These men, having fulfilled their high earthly destiny, have passed away from the society of the living; and but here and there a solitary pilgrim lingers among us, as a specimen of the best race of men that this country has yet produced. But their monuments, purer than marble, may be every where seen in our national institutions; and their epitaph, more durable than engravings upon brass, is daily read in the praises of a grateful people.

I cannot tell you with what mingled emotions I have trodden the consecrated soil of Bunker Hill, once sprinkled with their blood, or stood, at other times, by some of their sepulchres. On the banks of the mighty Potomac, and near its calm and deep waters, I have thought of the struggles of the revolution—of the conflicts of mind which framed our constitution, and matured our systems of government—of the dark storm that had passed by, and of the scenes of future brightness which may mark our country's progress through the long tract of coming ages, while I have mused, in silence, at the humble tomb of Washington. The mighty dead have seemed to collect around me, till losing the consciousness of the present, I have mingled in the conflicts of the historical past, and reposed in the calmness of the

prophetic future. There are many such hallowed spots on the American soil, sacred to the same lofty associations, where the christian freeman may stand, with equal delight and profit, and pay his homage to the patriot's memory, and his adoration to the patriot's God. And, in such a place, and at such a moment, who cannot gaze with thrilling raptures upon that picture which truth and poetry have furnished for such occasions, and in which reality and fancy have united their highest powers, and blended their finest colors; and to which genius has added her most beauteous touch.

"How sleep the brave, who sink to rest,
By all their country's wishes blest!
When Spring, with dewy fingers cold,
Returns to deck their hallowed mould,
She there shall dress a sweeter sod,
Than Fancy's feet have ever trod.

"By fairy hands their knell is rung,
By forms unseen their dirge is sung;
There Honor comes, a pilgrim gray,
To bless the turf that wraps their clay;
And Freedom shall awhile repair,
To dwell a weeping hermit there."

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